THE ALTERNATIVE POPE PROJECT

Valdir Ros – Pedro II

The Pope of Nova Iguaçu, Brazil

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Introduction

In 1968, Brazilian priest Valdir Ros (1942–1994) founded the Instituto Estrela Missionária (IEM; the Institute of the Missionary Star) in Urubici in his home diocese of Lages in the southern part of the country. It was an organization devoted to promoting mission among non-Christians and providing education for future missionaries. The same year, he moved to the diocese of Nova Iguaçu in the Baixada Fluminense, part of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan era, where he also became a pastor of the impoverished parish of Riachão. The seminar was founded with the support of the diocesan bishop. Still, the IEM had an unclear canonical status for a long time, but in 1977, it received the status of a diocesan pious association (*pia unio*). However, that was nothing compared to Ros' vision: to form a Latin American congregation that would contribute to world mission, not a group devoted to local parish work.

Though the relation had not been unproblematic before, in late 1979, an irreconcilable conflict grew between Valdir Ros and the bishop of Nova Iguaçu Adriano Hypólito OFM (1918–1996). There were several reasons: political, religious, personal–and medical. In conversations, private letters, printed books, and pamphlets, Ros fiercely attacked the bishop, accusing him of being a Jew, a Communist, a Freemason–and a demon. When the conflict reached one of its many peaks in 1981, members of the IEM, too, regarded Ros as severely ill, and he was confined to a psychiatric clinic against his will. By this time, he was replaced as the parish priest in Riachão, and IEM soon left the diocese to move to another part of the country.

Still, after ousting most of the priests and seminarians of the IEM in early 1982, Ros returned to Nova Iguaçu with a small group of followers. He had no right to minister in the diocese. Still, Ros regarded himself as the rightful pastor of Riachão and administered sacraments. Thus, he continued his pastoral work among his supporters there and in neighboring areas, constantly clashing with the bishop, the diocesan clergy, and most parishioners. Defying

the bishop, Ros also re-established the IEM in Nova Iguaçu. He regarded the institute as a faithful remnant that served as a bulwark against what he saw as the judeo-masonic-communist organization that called itself the Catholic Church but constituted a new religion. Its local leader, Bishop Adriano Hypólito, was looked upon as the "Great Whore of the Apocalypse."

Ros' return to Nova Iguaçu led to an even deeper conflict. By mid-1982, the diocese organized a rally against Ros, the so-called Celebration of Unity. Several bishops, the entire diocesan clergy, and thousands of laypeople went to Riachão, where a Mass was celebrated. It was a demonstration of church unity against Ros and his followers, who, not surprisingly, protested.

Ros' harsh denunciations were not only directed to his nemesis, the local bishop and the Brazilian episcopate at large, but also against Vatican II and the conciliar and post-conciliar popes: John XXIII (sed. 1958–1963), Paul VI (sed. 1963–1978), John Paul I (sed. 1978), and John Paul II (sed. 1978–2005). He saw them as heretics, having an increasingly "precarious jurisdiction," though they were still popes in some way. Thus, Ros did not subscribe to a sedevacantist position, i.e., the claim that the Holy See was empty due to the conciliar popes' heresies.

Still, at last, Ros concluded that John Paul II had lost all jurisdiction, and by 1985, he would publicly claim the papacy, assuming the name Peter II. He would uphold this claim until he passed away in 1994. Ros has no papal successor but still counts on a small group of adherents, mainly in the Riachão area.

Sources and Earlier Research

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The source material by and about Valdir Ros is relatively abundant. Two of his books are central to understanding his theology: *Abaixo o Muro da Vergonha* (1983; "Down with the Wall of Shame") and *O Primado – Pedro II* (1986a; "The Primacy: Peter II). While the first describes the apostasy of the Catholic

Church and modern popes' heresies mainly from the perspective of Nova Iguaçu, the second is more far-reaching and argues for Ros' papal claim.

However, Valdir Ros also published several briefer texts. One is a libel against Bishop Hypólito *Diocese de Nova Iguaçu: A grande meretriz do Apocalipse* (1982a; "The Diocese of Nova Iguaçu: The Great Whore of the Apocalypse"). Another is *Mensagem à Meretriz do Apocalipse e às suas Bestas Mitradas* (1982b; "Message to the Whore of the Apocalypse and Her Mitred Beasts), which is an attack against the Brazilian episcopate as a whole. A few texts published in the mid-1980s also refer to the basis for Ros' papal claims and the heresies of the post-conciliar Church. They include *Ubi Petrus, Ibi Ecclesia–Onde está Pedro, ali está* (1985; "Where Peter is, there is the Church") and *Significado apocalíptico do Vaticano II* (1986b; "The apocalyptical significance of Vatican II").[1]

For some years, the IEM published a yearly calendar, the *Calendário Estrela Missionária* (1979–1982, 1984), including texts about the Institute and its activities and mission theology, and reports about missions and missionaries in different parts of the world. While the first four calendars present a relatively standard conciliar Catholic message, the 1984 issue differs significantly from the others. It is filled with Ros' diatribes against the bishop and the post-Vatican II church and defends the re-established Estrela Missionária and its branches.[2]

Given the severity of the ecclesiastical conflict, the Nova Iguaçu diocesan archives (ADNI) have abundant documentation on the case. Two dossiers on Valdir Ros–a total of 280 pages–have been digitized. They include

[1] I have used the transcriptions of some of Valdir Ros' publications found on www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com but also scanned copies of pamphlets found in the Nova Iguaçu Diocesan archives, see note 3.

[2] I have used the scanned copies available on www.repositorio.im.ufrrj.br:8080/jspui/handle/1235813/3460

correspondence, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings, mainly dating from 1980 through 1982.[3]

The earlier research on Valdir Ros is limited. The only specialized study being Adriana da Silva Serafim's MA thesis "A Missa da Unidade entre faixas e crucifixos: Hierarquia e política na Diocese de Nova Iguaçu, 1982" (2013). It is a well-researched analysis of Bishop Hypólito's and Father Ros's controversy, mainly based on images and press material. The so-called Mass of Unity is the center of her attention; she calls it the "critical moment" in the conflict. The author also explains the historical contexts and the ecclesiastical and political situation in Nova Iguaçu. She did, however, not have access to all the written material in the diocesan archives, nor did she analyze Valdir Ros' papal claim or most of his later texts.[4]

A few other MA theses focus on Adriano Hypólito's time in Nova Iguaçu from different perspectives. Though they usually include brief notes on the conflict with Valdir Ros, they are mainly valuable studies on church politics and the relationship between the Bishop of Nova Iguaçu and the state authorities from the 1960s until the 1980s when the military governed Brazil.[5]

All source material and earlier research are in Portuguese, and all translations into English are mine. To the best of my knowledge, this research report is the first scholarly text in English that even mentions the name Valdir Ros, and it is the broadest academic study of his ministry in any language and the only one to discuss his papal claim. However, several of the earlier studies present a much more thorough analysis of the religio-political context and the church politics of Bishop Hypólito than I do.

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[3] Arquivo da Cúria Diocesana de Nova Iguaçu (hereafter ADNI): Pasta I: Caso Padre Valdir Ros – Documentos Oficiais, 1982 (hereafter ADNI I) and Pasta V: Instituto Estrela Missionária, 1980–1982 (herafter ADNI V), available on www.repositorio.im.ufrrj.br:8080/jspui/handle/1235813/3460.

[4] Serafim 2013. Adriana da Silva Serafim also published an article on the theme in Jean Sales & Alexandre Fortes (eds.), *A Baixada Fluminense e a ditadura militar: the Movimentos sociais, repressão e poder local*, Curitiba: Editora Prismas, 2016. Unfortunately, I have not had access to this work.

[5] Nascimento 2007, Silva 2014, and Sana 2015, cf. Sales & Freire 2020.

The Diocese of Nova Iguaçu and its Bishop

In 1966, Adriano Hypólito (1918–1996) became the bishop of Nova Iguaçu, and he retained the office until his retirement in 1992. He was a Franciscan friar ordained a priest in 1942 and worked as a parish priest and college teacher. In 1963, he was made auxiliary bishop of Salvador before being promoted to the ordinary of Nova Iguaçu three years later.

Adriano Hypólito's rise to the episcopate occurred during the Brazilian military coup in 1964 and coincided with the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), whose three last sessions he attended. The military regime initiated greater repression from 1968 onwards, including extrajudicial killings, "disappearances," and torture. At first, most of the official Church had remained silent about the coup and the authoritarian regime. Still, by the late 1960s and during the 1970s, many bishops and clerics openly criticized the regime for human rights abuses. In the 1970s, church representatives were tortured, kidnapped, and killed.

When Adriano Hypólito arrived, Nova Iguaçu was a young diocese. It was erected as late as 1960, but he was still its third bishop, as his predecessors had only stayed for short periods; he would remain for 26 years. The diocese was part of the Baixada Fluminense, a rapidly growing portion of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area. As a whole, the diocese was characterized by great poverty and much violence. Housing was inadequate, and many had no electricity, water, education, or health care.

Without any doubt, Adriano Hypólito was a progressive, socially active bishop. He was eager to implement the reforms of Vatican II in his rather radical interpretation. In his MA dissertation, Rafael Cerqueira do Nascimento studied the church politics of Bishop Hypolíto through the diocesan journal *A Folha* between 1974 and 1981. The journal is a central source when trying to understand his episcopate. *A Folha*, led by Hypólito, was politically and

theologically progressive and resisted the Brazilian military regime in non-uncertain terms. According to Nascimento, the journal represented a political culture of confrontation and resistance, supporting social movements that would contribute to change.

The ideological basis of the military regime that governed Brazil between 1964 and 1985 was the so-called national security doctrine. Its main goal was to keep order in the country and fight all elements that were regarded as subversive. A basic idea was to contribute to anti-communist fight, internationally and nationally. Like other authoritative regimes in Cold War Latin America, the Brazilian junta had a very inclusive definition of communism, and the repression of "subversives" became more violent after 1968.

Bishop Adriano Hypólito OFM

In the diocesan journal *A Folha*, the bishop constantly stressed social and political issues as an integral, or perhaps the most important, part of the Church's mission. It was one way to implement the Brazilian Bishops Conference's plan for pastoral work, the *Plano Pastoral de Conjunto*, which had a strong social dimension. Moreover, a diocesan branch of the Justitia et Pax organization was founded to defend human rights. As in the documents of the Latin American Bishops Conferences' (CELAM) general assemblies in Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1979, Bishop Hypólito focused on so-called social sins and sinful structures. Sin was not *only* an individual question. To live according to its preferential option for the poor, the Church had to fight unjust structures, including a capitalist system where the amassing of riches had become a form of idolatry. An essential part of this theology was that God was the liberator of his people. The Church's mission was to contribute to changes and cooperate with social movements while working for personal conversions.

Due to his staunch opposition to the regime, in 1976, Hypólito, one of the so-called "red bishops," was kidnapped by members of the paramilitary Aliança Anticomunista Brasileira and suffered torture and humiliation. In 1979, terrorists placed a bomb in the Cathedral. Thus, the threats against the bishop were real, indeed.[6]

Valdir Ros and the IEM

Valdir Ros was born in 1942 in Rio de Vargens in the Rio Grande do Sul province in southernmost Brazil. He attended seminary in Lajes, Santa Catarina, and was ordained a priest in 1965. A few months after his ordination, Ros traveled to Paraguay, where he met the missionary Nicolau da Cunha SVD (1931–1978). Together with him, Ros envisoned an institute that would train

[6] The main source for this part of the study is Nascimento 2007, cf. Serafim 2014, Silva 2014, and Sana 2015.

Latin American missionaries to work among non-Christians worldwide. The Instituto Estrela Missionária (IEM) was founded in 1968 in Urubici in his home diocese of Lages. The star alluded to in the Institute's name was the sign that the Three Wise Men followed to honor Christ Child.[7]

The bishop of Lages, Daniel Henrique Hostin (1890–1973), did not support the IEM. Therefore, just after the foundation, in 1968, Valdir Ros and a group of students moved to Nova Iguaçu, where he planned to educate missionaries for foreign missions. Bishop Adriano Hypólito welcomed them, not least because of the vocations crisis that plagued the Brazilian Church. Ros had read a book Hypólito wrote in the late 1950s about the severe lack of priests, and the text had greatly influenced him. That seems to be the main reason why they went to Nova Iguaçu. When arriving, the bishop made Ros pastor of the newly founded Nossa Senhora da Conceição parish in the Riachão neighborhood, where he also established his small seminary. In 1970, another priest joined the IEM: Fernando Gomes de Melo (1922–?), twenty years Ros' senior and ordained in 1957.[8]

The Old Chapel (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com)

[7] *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1979 and 1982, "Entrevista sobre a Paróquia do Riachão", *Boletim Diocesano: Diocese de Nova Iguaçu* (herefter BD), no. 162–163 (July–August 1982; ADNI I: 12), cf. Ros 1983.

[8] "Os acotecimentos da paróquia do Riachão: Nota official da cúria diocesana de Nova Iguaçu", 17 September 1982 (ADNI I: 34–36). On Fernando Melo, see also *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1982.

1975 Bishop Hypólito inaugurated a much larger seminary building close to the Riachão church. While Ros and IEM had been educating seminarians in the diocese for several years, the institute had no explicit canonical status. Eventually, on 31 May 1977, IEM was established as a *pia unio*, a pious association. According to Canon Law, such an association was an organized group gathered for a particular purpose and apostolate. It generally has a temporary status, and the group might, with time, be transformed into a congregation or an apostolic society. Though pious associations and apostolic societies can exist on an international or national level, the first step is usually at the diocesan level, which was the case of the IEM. However, their goal was to become an international apostolic society. Two years after the canonical establishment of the pious associate, the bishop ordained Ari Atunes, the first priest trained at the IEM seminary. In 1980, the second priest, Nelci Marcos Ramos, was ordained by John Paul II, and at the end of 1981, SEM already had nine priests.[9]

The Institute's main visions were to further the missionary interest locally and train missionaries for work among non-Christians. By 1979, the IEM had a substantial group of seminarians. There were at least 50 students from several Latin American countries and a few from Africa. They were led by Valdir Ros, the IEM's superior, his assistant, four spiritual directors, and a dozen teachers. Apart from the education work, the IEM clergy were responsible for the Riachão, Cacuia, and Sarapui parishes, including at least thirty small chapels in impoverished areas. They also supported missionary work in Paraguay and Lusophone Africa.[10]

On 22 August 1979, Bishop Hypólito gave IEM's female branch, the Instituto das Irmãs da Estrela Missionária (IIEM), the status of a pious

[9] BD 104–105 (August–September 1977; ADNI I: 2), cf. letter from IEM to Bishop Hypólito, 11 September 1980 (ADNI V: 3–8). On the ordinations, see *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1980–1982.

[10] BD 129 (September 1979; ADNI I: 3) and *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1980.

association, and a small group of women joined.[11] The was also a substantial lay branch, Sociedade Estrela Missionária (SEM), which supported the institute's work through their prayers, distributing IEM publications, and giving financial support. Still, ISM's primary source of financial aid were German, Austrian, and Swiss Catholic organizations and dioceses.[12]

Though he was a parish priest and a member of the Pastoral Council, Valdir Ros did not want to participate in its activities, whether meetings, courses, or retreats. In this way, at least indirectly, he opposed the bishop's pastoral agenda long before the significant clashes began in 1979, and he only wanted to devote himself to the Instituto without much contact with the bishop or the other clergy.[13]

Ros vs. Hypólito

Beginning in 1979, the relatively good relations between Ros and Bishop Adriano Hypólito would deteriorate rapidly. The catalyst was the conflict over a donation to the IEM by former parish priest José Beste (1909–1980). He was of German origin but had worked in Brazil since 1936 and been in charge of the parish of Belford Roxo, some 15 kilometers from Riachão, for more than three decades, from 1948 to 1979, when he returned to Germany. Before leaving, he donated land and a building in Belford Roxo to the IEM. According to Ros, Beste had been a staunch critic of the bishop's pastoral plan and wanted to support the Institutes's more traditional missionary ideals.[14]

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[11] BD 130 (October–November 1979; ADNI I: 4), cf. *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1979–1982.

[12] *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1979–1982.

[13] "Os acotecimentos da paróquia do Riachão: Nota official da cúria diocesana de Nova Iguaçu," 17 September 1982 (ADNI I: 34).

[14] The diocese's official obituary is found in BD 144–145 (January–February 1981; ADNI I: 5–6), cf. Ros 1983, and letter from Joanna Schmid to Bishop Hypólito, 8 January 1981 (ADNI V: 13–15). See also *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1982.

The diocese wanted to acquire the properties in Belford Roxo, but IEM, citing Beste's will, claimed they were not authorized to sell. Instead, they wanted to transform the house into a home for the IIEM sisters. However, without authorization from the ordinary, they could not move there. The diocese claimed they needed housing for the new parish priest and a parish auditorium, among other things. Further, they argued that the building was not Beste's private property but the parish's and that it was not his to donate. The diocese and IEM accused each other of not wanting to solve the problem, and the tone in letters and at meetings was increasingly confronting.[15]

Another part of the conflict was the bishop's reluctance to make the IEM into an apostolic institute (*sociedade clerical de vida comun sem votos públicos*), something they had ever hoped for since they arrived in the diocese in 1968. They wished to devote more time to training missionaries for work among non-Christians than to pastoral work in the diocese.[16]

After a year of deliberation and growing conflicts, in December 1980, and on the orders of the bishop, the new parish priest made a drastic move. He erected a wall inside the Nossa Senhora do Conceição church in Belford Roxo to mark the limit between the parish and the IEM. The wall behind the altar hid a statue of an enthroned Virgin Mary. As the wall was built, there was a bomb threat against the church, and somebody painted the words *Muro de Vergonha*–"Wall of Shame"–on the wall. The diocese accused Valdir Ros and his supporters of planting a fake bomb and of painting the graffiti.[17]

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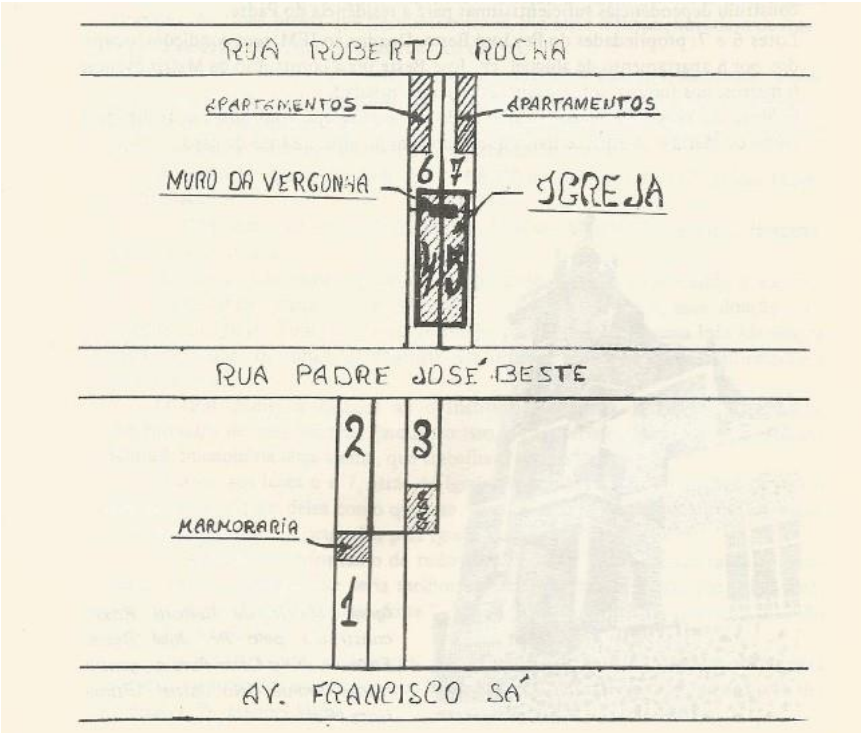
[15] Letter from Valdir Ros to Bishop Hypólito, 13 August 1980 (ADNI V: 2), letter from IEM to Bishop Hypólito, 11 September 1980 (ADNI V: 5–7), letter from Ros to Bishop Hypólito, 11 November 1980 (ADNI V: 10–11), and letter from Joanna Schmid to Bishop Hypólito, 8 January 1981 (ADNI V: 13–15), cf Ros 1983.

[16] Letter from IEM to Bishop Hypólito, 11 September 1980 (ADNI V: 5–8).

[17] Letter from Joanna Schmid to Bishop Hypólito, 8 January 1981 (ADNI V: 12–15), cf. Ros 1983.



The Church in Belford Roxo and the Muro da Vergonha (Ros 1983)

In early 1981, Ros wrote to the bishop that he wanted to leave the Cacuia, Sarapui, and Riachão parishes churches to focus on the seminary.[18] Eventually, on 26 July 1981, a new pastor was installed in the Nossa Senhora da Conceição parish in Riachão. The interim pastor was Agostinho Pretto (1922–2011), a well-known radical priest. Though there was some commotion during the ceremony, the bishop and the new parish priest thought they had found some reconciliation with Ros and his group.[19]

That would certainly not be the case as the conflict would reach new heights. Through a leaflet titled *Igreja de Nova Iguaçu: Um organismo intoxicado* ("The Church of Nova Iguaçu: A Poisoned Organism"), Ros invited

[18] Letter from Ros to Bishop Hypólito, 8 February 1981 (ADNI V: 16), letter from Ros to Bishop Hypólito, 8 June 1981 (ADNI V: 17), and letter from Ros to Bishop Hypólito, 18 June 1981,

[19] "Os acotecimentos da paróquia do Riachão: Nota official da cúria diocesana de Nova Iguaçu", 17 September 1982 (ADNI I: 35), cf. letter from IEM to Bishop Hypólito, 11 September 1980 (ADNI V: 5).

people to a meeting in Riachão on 30 August 1981, where he and two other IEM priests concelebrated Mass. On this occasion, Ros preached that the bishop was a communist and full of pride; he replaced the pope in Nova Iguaçu. Ros also presented what he saw as a clear sign. The diocese had tried to exchange the Virgin with the Devil through the Wall of Shame, and he urged those present to travel to Bedford Roxo and tear down the wall that divided the church building. In short, Satan ruled the diocese of Nova Iguaçu through his ambassador, Adriano Hypólito.[20]

After the celebration on 30 August, even some of his closest colleagues, including Fernando Melo, concluded that Valdir Ros had lost his mind. Two days later, on 1 September 1981, for fear of his and others' safety, some of the IEM representatives arranged that Ros be brought against his will to the psychiatric clinic in Gávea. There, he was later diagnosed with schizophrenic paranoia. According to Ros' later testimonies, he was kidnapped, drugged, and brainwashed by the bishop using the usual Soviet practices. After being released from the hospital, Ros recuperated at a Franciscan monastery for two months.[21]

In mid-1981, IEM inaugurated another seminary in the diocese of Ponta Grossa in Paraná, and in December of the same year, Valdir Ros left Nova Iguaçu. On 8 January 1982, Fernando Gomes de Mello wrote to Bishop Hypólito to formally request permission to close the seminar in Nova Iguaçu and transfer all activities of the IEM to Punta Grossa. A few weeks later, they left. With the transfer, the IEM no longer had the status of a pious association, as it had only been recognized as such on a diocesan level in Nova Iguaçu.[22]

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[20] "A serviço da Rainha das missões", 22 August 1981 (ADNI V: 45) and "Igreja de Nova Iguaçu: Um organismo intoxicado" (ADNI V: 48-49), cf. "Os acotecimentos da paróquia do Riachão: Nota official da cúria diocesana de Nova Iguaçu", 17 September 1982 (ADNI I: 35).

[21] Certificate by Dr Rawlinson Prestes Lemos, 24 May 1982 (ADNI I: 48) and "Os acotecimentos da paróquia do Riachão: Nota official da cúria diocesana de Nova Iguaçu", 17 September 1982 (ADNI I: 34–36).

[22] Letters from Fernando Gomes de Melo to Bishop Hypólito, 17 December 1981 and 8 January 1982; letter from Bishop Hypólito to Melo, 8 January 1982 (ADNI I:1–1a; 73); BD 157 (February 1982; ADNI I: 7), BD 158–159 (March-April 1982; ADNI I: 8),

While the situation was chaotic, nothing seemed unusual for someone who only read the IEM's 1982 *Calendário*, printed in 1981. Like the calendars for 1979 through 1981, it included many texts from Vatican II, particularly the mission document "Ad Gentes" and texts by John Paul II and Bishop Hypólito. However, it is noteworthy that Valdir Ros did not sign any articles at all in the 1982 edition. In earlier years, he had been an active author.[23]

In late 1981, when leaving the Franciscans where he had convalesced, Valdir Ros went to Germany to meet friends and benefactors. At the same, his brothers in the IEM prepared the new seminary in Ponta Grossa. However, as Ros returned to Brazil in early February 1982, he suddenly decided that IEM should re-establish itself in Nova Iguaçu. He saw the Institute as a bulwark against communism, which was sorely needed in Bishop Hypólito's diocese. When other members, including his old brother-in-arms Fernando Melo, refused to move, they were expelled.[24]

In March 1982, Valdir Ros and his few remaining supporters arrived in Nova Iguaçu, where they took charge of various chapels in the neighborhoods and threatened the new parish priest of Riachão, Luiz (Luigi) Constanzo Bruno (1942–2022), by letter and in person. In some instances, the conflicts led to physical altercations, and there were, once again, attempts to bring Ros to a psychiatric facility, though they failed. It is difficult to estimate, but Ros probably had at least a few hundred adherents and others who supported him.[25]

Bishop Hypólito 26 April 1982, in Diocese de Nova Iguaçu, *Comunicado* 01/82 (ADNI I: 38–41); and letter from IEM from Fernando Gomes de Melo and others in Ponta Grossa to Bishop Hypólito, March 10, 1982 (ADNI I: 78–80). On the seminary in Ponta Grossa, see also *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1982.

[23] *Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1979–1982.

[24] Letter from IEM from Fernando Gomes de Melo and others in Ponta Grossa to Bishop Hypólito, March 10, 1982 (ADNI I: 78–80).

[25] Statement by Bishop Hypólito 26 April 1982, in Diocese de Nova Iguaçu, *Comunicado* 01/82 (ADNI I: 38–41), letter from Ros to the bishop of Ponta Grossa, Geraldo Peranda, 8 March 1982 (ADNI V: 20–21), letter from Ros to Fernando Melo, 7 March 1982 (ADNI V: 22), letter from Fernando Melo to Bishop Hypólito, 10 March 1982 (ADNI V: 23), letter from Fernando Melo and other members of IEM to Bishop

The Current Church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição do Riachão (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com)

In April 1982, Valdir Ros published *Diocese de Nova Iguaçu: A grande meretriz do Apocalypse* ("The Diocese of Nova Iguaçu: The Great Whore of the Apocalypse"). In this four-page pamphlet, he applied the Book of Revelation 17: 1–6 to the diocese, the Brazilian bishops, and Vatican representatives. Still, for some reason, he did not include the current pope, John Paul II, possibly because he believed the real pontiff was held hostage by the curia and replaced by an author.[26] In the libelous tract, Ros wrote that Bishop Hypólito was "God's enemy and an ambassador of Satan with an honorary doctorate in heresy." He

Hypólito, 10 March 1982 (ADNI I: 78–80), and letter from Ros to Father Luiz Bruno, 23 March 1982 (ADNI V: 26–27).

[26] For these kind of theories, most often applied to Paul VI, see Lundberg 2020: 60.

did not preach Christianity but Marxism, atheism, Protestantism, Masonry, and Judaism. In Ros' view, the bishop was much like Jim Jones, a specialist in brainwashing and "robotization," leading his flock to death and Hell.[27]

On 26 April 1982, the Diocese in Nova Iguaçu found it necessary to issue another formal declaration on the status of the parish of Riachaõ, the IEM, and Valdir Ros. The diocesan curia declared that the IEM was formally transferred to the diocese of Ponta Grossa. Therefore, as a pious association in the diocese of Nova Iguaçu, it had ceased to exist. The curia emphasized that Valdir Ros had returned to Nova Iguaçu without permission and without being incardinated in the diocese. Thus, Ros had no right to preach or administer sacraments anywhere in the diocese, whether in Riachão, Cacuia, Sarapui, or elsewhere. Still, the diocese did not want to open a formal canonical process against Ros as they regarded him as mentally ill. On his, Ros had declared himself the pastor of Riachão and actively tried to take over chapels and church buildings. By then, he only said the so-called Tridentine Mass in Latin, not the so-called Novus Ordo, promulgated by Paul VI in 1969.[28]

The next step in the conflict was a massive power demonstration from the diocese's side. Bishop Hypólito decided to organize a *Celebração da Unidade,* also known as the *Missa da Unidade,* that should take place in Riachão on 23 May 1982. This Celebration of Unity was a means to show the unity between the pope, the diocese, the clergy, and the faithful against the schismatic Valdir Ros and his supporters. Nobody could have believed it would be a way to reconcile the diocese and Valdir Ros.[29] On that Sunday, no other Masses should be celebrated within the confines of the diocese. Four bishops, fifty priests, and some 10,000 laypeople were transported to Riachão, where the prelates co-celebrated Mass. A few hundred Valdir Ros supporters gathered, protesting

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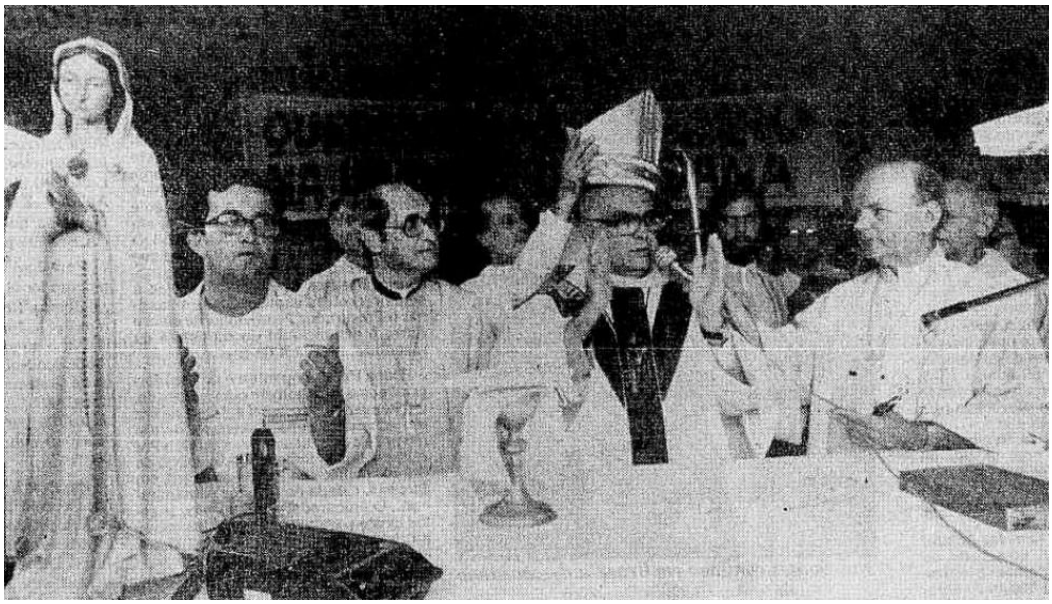
[27] Ros 1982a.

[28] Statement by Bishop Hypólito 26 April 1982, in Diocese de Nova Iguaçu, *Comunicado* 01/82 (ADNI I: 38–41), cf. Declaration by the bishop, 2 April 1982 (ADNI I: 46).

[29] BD 161 (June 1982; ADNI I: 9), Diocese de Nova Iguaçu, "Celebração da Unidade Matriz do Riachão", 23 May 1982 (ADNI I: 20–26).

against the communist clergy. They brought banderols with messages such as "The people want peace, truth, the gospel, and Father Valdir Ros" and the much more explicit: "Out with the Communist goats." According to press reports, there was much shouting against the bishops and priests during the entire celebration, including the Mass, but no major physical altercations.[30]



The Mass of Unity (Jornal do Brasil, 24 May 1982)

Two months later, on 24 July 1982, Ros gathered his supporters to a ceremony where he would say Mass, hurl maledictions at the diocese, and burn an effigy of the bishop together with the documents he had issued. One of the reasons for this celebration was that the bishop organized a special mission project in Riachão and neighboring areas.[31] A group of Capuchin friars should missionize

[30] "Entrevista sobre a Paróquia do Riachão" in: BD 162–163 (July–August 1982; ADN I: 11–13), 164 (September 1982; ADNI I: 14–17a), and 165 (October 1982; ADNI I: 18–19), cf. interviews with Bishop Hypólito, 2 June 1982 (ADNI I: 49–65); and *Informativo* No. 21Q, special issue "No Riahaçao: Dom Adriano recebe o apoio de dez mil fiéis"(ADNI I: 27–30). For an excellent study on the Celebration/Mass of Unity, see Serafim 2014.

[31] "Festa julhina Igreja Nossa Senhora da Conceição Riachão", 24 July 1982 (ADNI V: 57).

for almost a month between 24 July and 20 August, trying to bring the wayward back into the bishop's fold. During this period, there were constant confrontations between Ros' supporters and other parishioners. When the Capuchins tried to enter a chapel or a church building, Ros' adherents went there immediately, trying to stop them. On several occasions, law enforcement had to intervene to keep the groups apart.[32]

In August 1982, Valdir Ros published his *Mensagem à Meretriz do Apocalipse e às suas Bestas Mitrados* ("Message to the Whore of the Apocalypse and her Mitred Beasts"). It was distributed to all Brazilian bishops. There, Ros wrote that the Church was going through its worst crisis ever. Modernism had triumphed under John XXIII, who was a mason. From that time, the Jewish, masonic, and communist "poison" had spread to bishops and priests, leading to almost general apostasy. Ros asserted that the Brazilian Bishops Conference included two groups: communists/masons and cowards/marionets. Both groups were traitors. On a global level, the Church was gradually transformed into a non-Christian religion dominated by Jews, masons, and communists.[33]

At about the same time, in August 1982, the group around Ros published an anonymous comic book called *A Santinha que venceu o demônio* ("The Little Saint who Defeated the Demon"). It was a story about a young, pious woman who organized the inhabitants of a town to fight and drive away a communist bishop. That the bishop had a physical likeness to Adriano Hypólito is not surprising.[34] Somewhat later, Ros distributed texts containing different exorcisms to be used against the bishop and his closest men: "the apocalyptic dragon and his satanic legion."[35]

[32] BD 162–163 (July–August 1982; ADNI I: 10). On the Capuchin missions, see also ASDI I: 81–97.

[33] Ros 1982b.

[34] *A Santinha* 1982

[35] "Exorcismos contra D. Adriano e sua legião satânica" (ADNI V: 80–90).

The IEM Seminary in the 1990s (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com)

The IEM lost many supporters and adherents in 1981 and 1982. Still, by 1983, the Estrela Missionária was re-organized in Nova Iguaçu. The old Instituto Estrela Missionária (IEM) "died a moral death" on 1 September 1981 when Valdir Ros was brought to the psychiatric clinic, but now it was on its way to recovery; new seminarians joined. The IEM was described as the head of the Estrela Missionária. The female branch, the Instituto das Irmãs da Estrela Missionária (IIEM), had a handful of members; it was the left arm. The Sociedade Estrela Missionária (SEM) was founded 1 June 1981. It was an organization for particularly motivated laypeople and was described as the right arm of the Estrela Missionária.

The organization's base, "its heart and body," was the Comunidade Eclesial de Base da Estrela Missionária (CEBEM). The local communities or quasi-parishes comprised the organization and was formally established on 8 December 1982. An individual community should have at least a hundred members. Before that, it was considered a mission. In 1983, the Estrela

Missionária had 35 missions in Nova Iguaçu. Thus, no individual community, not even the one in Riachão, had more than a hundred adherents. On 31 May 1983, another organization, the Instituto Secular da Virgem Maria e São José, was founded. It was a group of lay people who were part of the CEBEM and consecrated to live in chastity. Though it is difficult to ascertain the number of members and supporters of the Estrela Missionária after the return of Valdir Ros, they were at least several hundred.[36]

The Papal Claim

On 12 October 1985, Valdir Ros was proclaimed pope. In a couple of texts, he explains the context and the argument as to why he was elected. The most extensive text is *O Primado: Pedro II* (1986b; "The Primacy: Peter II"). I have also used two briefer texts relating to the theme: *Ubi Petrus, Ibi Ecclesia: Onde está Pedro, ali está a Igreja* (1985; "Where Peter is, there is the Church") and *Significado apocalíptico do Vaticano II* (1986a; "Vatican II's Apocalyptic Significance").

Valdir Ros' argumentation is perhaps not entirely unique but relatively uncommon. He was neither a sedevacantist, a conclavist, or a mysticalist papal claimant. Thus, he did not believe the Holy See was vacant, even if the conciliar and post-conciliar popes had been heretics. He did not think gathering an alternative conclave was necessary. Moreover, Ros did not claim that God mystically crowned him pope.[37] His line of argument was that in conciliar and post-conciliar times, the popes' heresies led to a gradual loss of papal jurisdiction and that the jurisdiction had disappeared entirely during John Paul II's papacy.

[36] *The Calendário Estrela Missionária* 1984.
[37] For an explanation of these positions, see Lundberg 2020: 43–46.

A central part of *O Primado* is a long section called "A Igreja sobreviveu sob a jurisdição precária de quatro papas" ("The church survived four popes' precarious jurisdiction"). The "precarious jurisdiction" refers to the gradual loss of jurisdiction and ecclesiastical power that influenced the liceity and, ultimately, the validity of the sacraments.

This period began after the death of Pius XII in 1958, though Ros also taught that he, too, had taught some heresies during his pontificate. Still, the drastically reduced jurisdictional power came with the election of John XXIII and ended in 1985, during the papacy of John Paul II. Though Pope John had been a heretic even before the Council, Vatican II had initiated an era of almost complete darkness. In Ros' view, it was Pope John's intention as he wanted to promote public apostasy, as he was a Freemason and Jew, and wanted to encourage a global, human-centered religion.

Valdir Ros–Pedro II (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com)

Valdir Ros claimed that John XXIII and his three successors had taught schism, heresy, and apostasy. This process gradually separated the head–the

Pope–from the Body of Christ. The Church was not acephalous, but it was radically incapacitated as the head of the Church was schismatic and heretical. In the beginning, the heresies were not public; they were disguised. Still, he claimed that the false teachings of Paul VI were more evident than his predecessor's, but they were still not public in the canonical sense.

Valdir Ros asserted that through Vatican II, the "enemies of the Church" destroyed it from within. Though Jews, freemasons, and communists all were enemies, to Ros, the main culprits were the Jews. According to him, both John XXIII and Paul VI were Jews.

In Ros' ecclesiastical conspiracy theology, the anti-Christ was not a person but a human-diabolic organization that planted cancerous tumors into the Body of Christ. Through metastasizing, the Church was transformed into the Body of Anti-Christ. Ros claimed that the Jews were its head and the Freemasons and the communists its arms. In short, it was Jews who convoked, promulgated, and executed the decisions of Vatican II. In this endeavor, they were readily assisted by Masons and Marxists. According to Ros, this infiltration meant that the Jews, once again, had committed "deicide"; they had crucified Christ a second time. The new religious organization that was the effect of the Council and the Jewish infiltration was the "Whore of the Apocalypse." Though the apostasy was almost general, a small but faithful remnant, the Body of Christ, still existed with Valdir Ros and his adherents.

Through the cancer implanted and its metastasizing, the popes, the cardinals, and bishops were the main actors in the conciliar and post-conciliar destruction of doctrine and liturgy, teaching un-Christian ideas of religious liberty, ecumenism, and interreligious dialogue. The new teachings were based on modernism and human rights instead of Sacred Scripture and Tradition.

Ros contented that the four papal elections between 1958 and 1978 were valid, and he thought that John Paul II had been a good actor for some time, not making his heresy entirely public. By 1985, however, he was unmasked. By then, the construction of the new religion was complete, and there was hardly any papal jurisdiction left. The promulgation of the new Code of Canon

Law in 1983 had been one of his most evident heretical acts. Thus, the Council's intention to promote public apostasy was finally realized under John Paul II, and he was deposed as the pope. However, there was no regular way of electing a valid pope, as all cardinals had become apostates and, thus, no longer Christians. They were Jews, Masons, Communists, Protestants, and Neo-pagans.[38]

Valdir Ros emphasized that the so-called Catholic traditionalism did not solve the problems. These traditionalists included Marcel Lefebvre's Priestly Society of St. Pius X and different sedevacantist groups. The latter taught that the Holy See was vacant. Though their positions could look better on the outside than the conciliar religion, to Ros, they were yet another part of the Jewish conspiracy. Traditionalists did not constitute the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church; they were divided into many factions. They had independent, non-valid bishops and clerics as they did not have jurisdiction or taught that the Holy See was vacant. Though Ros was not convinced that all traditionalists were ipso facto heretics, they were at least schismatics who provided the faithful with a false sense of security. In other words, they functioned as "anesthetics or tranquilizers." They were one of Satan's many tricks to "deceive the elect."[39]

As the papal jurisdiction was about to expire during John Paul II's reign, by divine providence, Valdir Ros was made Pope Peter II, the name according to prophecies given to the last pontiff in history. On 12 October 1985, Ros was installed in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora Aparecida in Rosa dos Ventos, and at that moment, he re-established complete papal jurisdiction. There was never any vacant see, but the Holy See was transferred from Rome to Nova Iguaçu by this act. On the same day, Ros became a bishop, though not consecrated by any other bishop, as all were apostates.

[38] Ros 1986b, cf. Ros 1986a.
[39] Ros 1986b.

Valdir Ros was not elected at any conclave and did not claim to have proclaimed himself the pope. He insisted that his way to the papacy had begun over a decade ago when Paul VI had made him his vicar. Ros based his view on an interpretation of a letter dated 8 March 1974, sent by the Secretary of State, providing papal encouragement of Ros' and IEM's work. To Ros, the central message of the letter was found in this passage:

> O Santo Padre, vê e deseja encorajar as iniciativas do gênero a que se refere, que intetam em última análise, secundar o incremento da obra da evangelização, cuja responsabilidade e solicitude premeira pesam exatamente sobre os ombros do Sucessor de Pedro na chefia do Colégio Episcopal.[40]
>
> The Holy Father acknowledges and wishes to encourage initiatives of the kind to which you refer (i.e., IEM), which ultimately aim to support the growth of the work of evangelization, the primary responsibility for which weighs directly on the shoulders of the Successor of Peter as the head of the Episcopal College.

To Ros, the verb *secundar* used in the letter should be understood as "support," "assist," "help," or "reinforce." Following his interpretation, he had received "delegated jurisdiction" from Paul VI in 1974 and thus became a kind of "co-pope" or "vice-pope," who should become the pope when necessary. Pope Paul's decision was a special privilege given to Ros to secure the survival of the Church so that the Holy See would never be vacant.[41]

After assuming the papacy on 12 October 1985, Pedro II denounced John Paul II and officially deposed him. He reinstated the 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law, thus denouncing the 1983 version promulgated by John Paul II. He condemned all the documents of Vatican II, the new rites of the Mass, and other sacraments. Through a decree, Pedro put an end to all dialogue

[40] Ros 1985.
[41] Ros 1985, cf. Ros 1986b: 91–94.

with “apostates or heathens, such as Protestants, heretics, schismatics, neo-pagans, Jews, atheists, and Muslims.”

By these means, Ros claimed he had re-established a “Christocentric, Mariocentric, and Ecclesiocentric Church,” replacing the man-made “anti-Church.” In the resurrected Church, Christ is the invisible head and the universal king, and Mary is the universal queen. At the same time, Pedro II is the visible head, the vicar of Christ, and the universal monarch.

In this true Church, there should be no episcopal collegiality, no national bishops conferences, and no decentralization; the pope-monarch should govern everything. The true Church would, however, remain a small group that lived in the “apocalyptic desert,” fighting Judaism, Masonry, and Communism until the end of times. Outside this remnant Church, there is no salvation. In other words, outside the Estrela Missionária, there is no Church. Thus, to become Catholics, bishops, priests, and laypeople must subject themselves to Peter II’s authority.[42]

The IEM 50-year celebration in 2018 (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com)

[42] Ros 1986b.

Though it lasted almost a decade, Pedro II's papal administration is very little known in the current state of research. Valdir Ros – Pedro II died on 5 May 1994 in Nova Iguaçu. After five years, his body was exhumed. On that occasion, his faithful discovered that the priestly garments he was buried in were unusually well preserved. They were later exposed in the Sanctuário Nossa Senhora das Missões.[43]

Pedro has no successor as the pope, but Parish of Nossa Senhora da Conceição members continue to claim to be the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of the end times."[44]

The IEM 50-year celebration in 2018 (www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com

[43] "Aos 5 de Maio de 1994 Deus chamava para si o último Papa legítimo da Santa Igreja Católica: Pedro II (Padre Valdir Ros)", padrevaldirros.wordpress.com /2016/04/30/aos-5-de-maio-de-1994-deus-chamava-para-si-o-ultimo-papa-legitimo-da-santa-igreja-catolica-pedro-ii-padre-valdir-ros/

[44] "Paróquia Nossa Senhora da Conceição do Riachão 1968–2018", www.padrevaldirros.wordpress.com/2019/01/08/paroquia-nossa-senhora-da-conceicao-do-riachao-1968-2018; and "Estrela Missionária: 50 anos sob o manto da Rainha das Missões", padrevaldirros.wordpress.com/2018/06/10/estrela-missionaria-50-anos-sob-o-manto-da-rainha-das-missoes

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